

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 PM-05 SP-02

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO AMEMBAQSY CONAKRY IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7257

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 770

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, SL, GV

SUBJ: SEKOU TOURE'S VISIT TO SIERRA LEONE

REF: FREETOWN 0742 (NOTAL)

1. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY TO CONAKRY (REGTEL), PRESIDENT SEKOU TOURE IS SCHEDULED TO VISIT SIERRA LEONE MARCH 8 TO 10 (AS OPPOSED TO MARCH 7 TO 9 PREVIOUSLY INDICATED). IN DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT STEVENS TODAY, MARCH 6, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS PROBABLE THAT THE VISIT WILL BE POSTPONED.

2. IN THE COURSE OF MY CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT ON ANOTHER MATTER I ALLUDED TO THE TOURE VISIT, THE PRESIDENT SHOOK HIS HEAD AND SAID THAT UNFORTUNATELY HE HAD TROUBLES WITH THE VISIT. HE ASKED ME IF I HAD HEARD OF THE INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED YESTERDAY, MARCH 5, AT A FOOTBALL MATCH BETWEEN A VISITING GUINEAN TEAM AND A LOCALONE. IN THE COURSE OF THE GAME A FIGHT BROKE OUT DURING WHICH ONE OF THE PLAYERS KICKED A PROSTRATE SIERRA LEONEAN PLAYER IN THE FACE, KNOCKING OUT TWO TEETH AND THEN SLPEED THE MAN. THIS ENRAGED THE LOCAL
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FANS BUT THEIR ANGER BROADENED FROM ITS FOCUS ON THE TEAM TO FOULAHS (GUINEANS) IN GENERAL. SINCE THERE ARE MANY FOULAHS IN FREETOWN THEY CAN SERVE AS A CONVENIENT SCAPEGOAT. THE PRESIDENT SAID THE SITUATION WAS UGLY AND THE PROBLEM WAS AALSO COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE FOULAHS ARE, IN HIS WORDS, ENEMIES OF SEKOU TOURE. THE PRESIDENT SHOOK HIS HEAD AND REMARKED, "HE CAN'T COME, HE CAN'T COME." HE WENT

ON TO SAY THAT HE WAS AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF HIS FOREIGN MINISTER TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH HIM (AND OBVIOUSLY ALSO THE VICE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER WHO WERE WAITING IN THE PRESIDENT'S ANTEROOM WHEN I PASSED THROUGH). I EXPRESSED MY REGRET ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND SAID THAT I HOPED MATTERS COULD BE STRAIGHTENED OUT.

3. COMMENT: PRESIDENT STEVENS HAS ALWAYS REGARDED HIS RELATIONS WITH SEKOU TOURE AS A MATTER OF GREAT SENSITIVITY. FOR THAT REASON SIERRA LEONE/GUINEA RELATIONS ARE HANDLED BY STATE HOUSE OT REPEAT NOT BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. SIERRA LEONE AND GUINEA ALSO HAVE A MUTUAL DEFENSE AGREEMENT ORIGINALLY ESTABLISHED BY SIR ALBERT MARGAI IN THE 1960'S. IT MAY BE THAT AMONG PRESIDENT STEVENS' CONCERNS IN THIS SITUATION IS ONE OF AVOIDING ANY POSSIBLE MOTIF FOR INTERVENTION BY SEKOU TOURE.
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